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C O N F I D E N T I A L SHENYANG 000200

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5 YEARS AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CH](#) [PMIL](#) [ROK](#)
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH ROK POLMIN SUNGNAM LIM: FRUSTRATIONS
IN THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

Classified By: Consul General Stephen Wickman, Reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

¶1. (SBU) ROK Political Minister Lim Sungnam, a relative newcomer in Beijing (two months, overlapping by his account somewhat awkwardly with his predecessor), dropped by Shenyang briefly on November 9 before jetting off to Harbin as part of a Northeast familiarization tour. Lim asked the Consul General whether he had heard anything from local experts on North Korea issues. The CG said experts here tend to talk among themselves about such issues and suggested Lim visit Yanji and Yanbian Prefecture to see the Sino-Korean experience firsthand. Lim said he was also traveling there later in the week.

¶2. (C) Lim's meetings with scholars at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences (interestingly not with LASS Director and Chinese media darling Lu Chao) produced what he thought were interesting insights. First, the analysts he talked to see stability in the Korean peninsula continuing under almost any scenario. Secondly, the same said scholars speak of unification of the two Koreas in a positive light, as if it is a real possibility at some point. Lim offered the caveat the he does put too much stock in the value of Chinese intellectual opinion on the subject.

¶3. (C) Lim said he sees two opposing schools at work in Chinese government views on the Korean Peninsula--the burden school and the buffer school. The burden school sees the DPRK as nothing but a burden to the Chinese. The view is espoused by younger members of the Chinese Communist Party and forward-leaning intellectuals. The buffer school of thought, which sees the DPRK in a more conventional light as a buffer zone between China and the United States, is espoused by elder members of the Party leadership. Lim sees both schools of thought at work in the behavior of the Chinese he deals with: they talk to ROKG reps in terms of the burden school but they tend to act in accordance with the buffer school.

¶4. (C) Lim believes the DPRK will never give up its nuclear weapons now that they have successfully tested them twice, so he thinks the best thing to do is to act to prevent 1) a third nuclear test of nuclear capability; 2) proliferation of any DPRK nuclear capabilities; and/or 3) a major increase in DPRK stockpiles that could destabilize the region. Lim is personally quite pessimistic about the Six-Party Talks achieving its stated goals but thinks it is an important forum, in which all parties could agree to exchange ideas and keep in regular working-level contact. Some ten years down the line, Lim opined, it could form the basis for a new Northeast Asia security cooperation architecture.

15. (C) When asked about his assessment of the level of bilateral cooperation he sees from the Chinese, Lim was most negative. The Chinese perception is that the current leadership in the ROK wants to cut China out of the negotiations and diplomatic process on the Korean peninsula, so the authorities punish the ROK by being less responsive to ROK Embassy contact requests and other inquiries than in the past. In response to a number of requests on important issues, for example, the requests to turn over the aged POW defectors recently in the South Korean news, "we are getting a much colder reception from the Chinese," Lim said. He blamed this partly on mistaken perceptions and partly on what he termed the "Commercialist Characteristics of Chinese Diplomacy." Lim described this as a propensity to link everything, engaging in tit for tat on even wholly unrelated issues. Lim says this works at all levels of their sometimes difficult bilateral relationship.

WICKMAN